

The Sixth Impossible Thing: Man

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June 7, 2007

(for TennValley RTB chapter mtg)

Meaninglessness of Existence

“We ‘*are*’ because one group of fishes had a peculiar fin anatomy that could transform into legs for terrestrial creatures; because the earth never froze entirely during an ice age; because a small and tenuous species, arising in Africa a quarter of million years ago, had managed, so far, to survive by hook and by crook. We may yearn for a ‘higher’ answer -- but none exists.”

S. J. Gould

Do animals “yearn” for a
higher existence?

“Pitiless Indifference”

Richard Dawkins,

River Out of Eden: A Darwinian View of Life, 1995

"The universe we observe has precisely the properties we should expect if there is, at bottom, no design, no purpose, no evil and no good, nothing but blind, pitiless indifference."

Nature is indifferent – man is not.

**Instead, indifference is a serious
character flaw in humans.**

**I'm sure even Dawkins would
consider certain actions “evil” if
sufficiently senseless, violent and
inelegant against say his own child.**

**At some point EVERYONE
acknowledges the reality of Evil,
even if they never acknowledge
Good.**

**[Satan has always had better press
than God.]**

“Pitiless Indifference...Bleakness”

Richard Dawkins,

River Out of Eden: A Darwinian View of Life, 1995

"The universe we observe has precisely the properties we should expect if there is, at bottom, no design, no purpose, no evil and no good, nothing but blind, pitiless indifference."

Peter Atkins, *The Second Law*, 1984

"We are the children of chaos, and the deep structure of change is decay. At root, there is only corruption, and the unstemmable tide of chaos. Gone is purpose; all that is left is direction. This is the bleakness we have to accept as we peer deeply and dispassionately into the heart of the universe."

What *animal* cares about “chaos” and “bleakness” ?

If chaos is all there is, why is math (a purely abstract thought process) so good at explaining a universe differentiated from chaos. In fact, the universe is not chaos at all. Mathematician James Jeans once opined that the universe appears more to be the product of a great “thought.”

If there is only bleakness, then why would we have any idea that bleakness is so “bleak?”

“Purely Physical ... live with it!”

Paul Churchland, *Matter and Consciousness*, 1984

“The important point about the standard evolutionary story is that the human species and all of its features are the wholly physical outcome of a purely physical process ... If this is the correct account of our origins then there is neither need, nor room, to fit any nonphysical substances or properties into our theoretical account of ourselves. We are creatures of matter. And we should learn to live with that fact.”

**If so, why “should” we do or think
anything.**

**Whence cometh this idea of an
“ought?”**

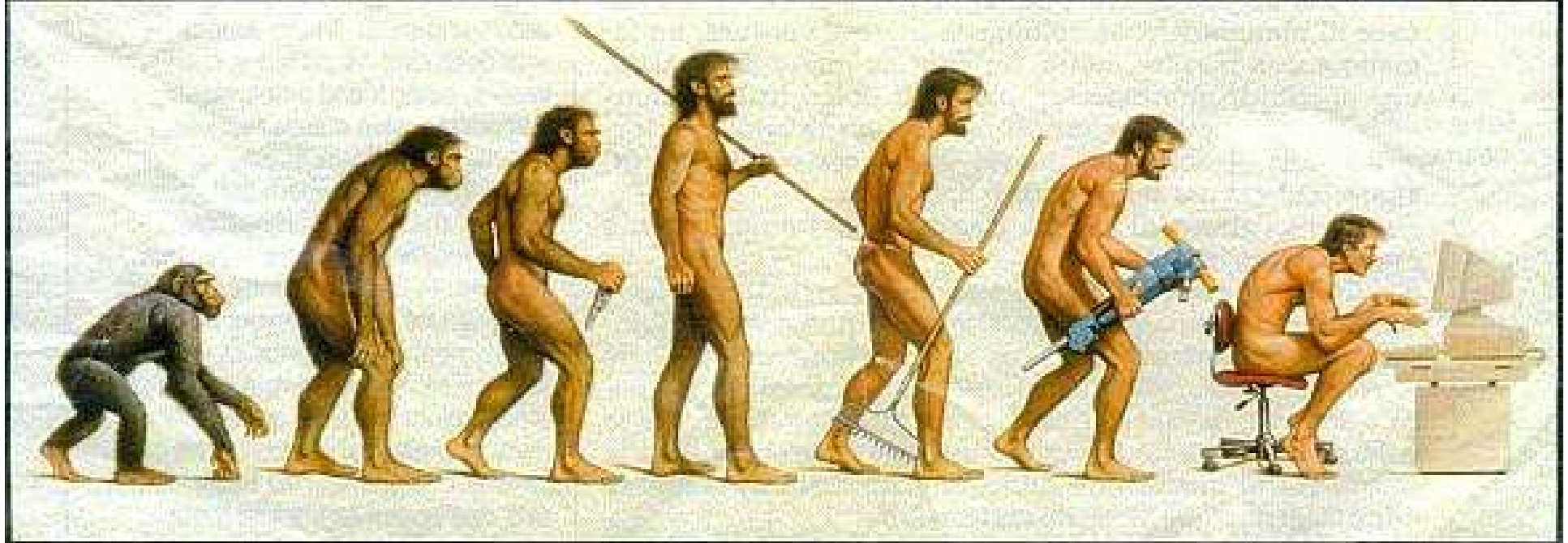
**Why does Churchland get to
establish himself as an authority
for “ought” if at bottom he is as
meaningless as a blob of carbon
matter?**

Carl Sagan

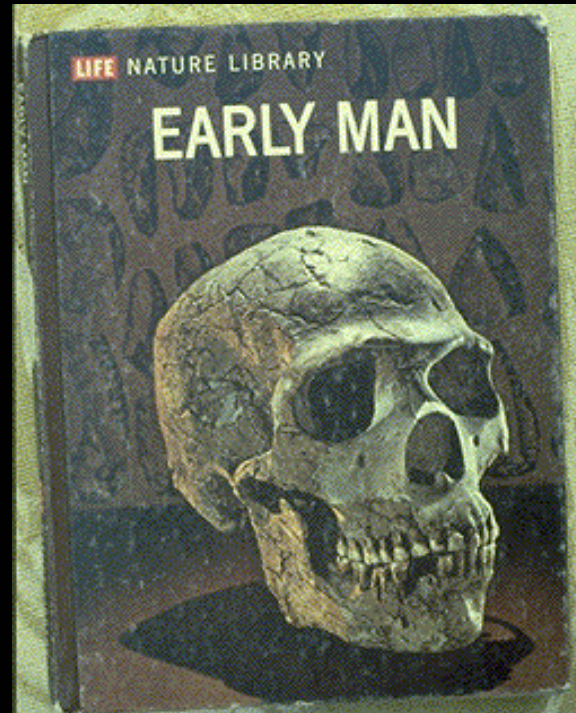
“...human beings (and all other species) have slowly evolved by natural processes from a succession of more ancient beings with no divine intervention needed along the way.”

The Sixth “Impossible Thing”

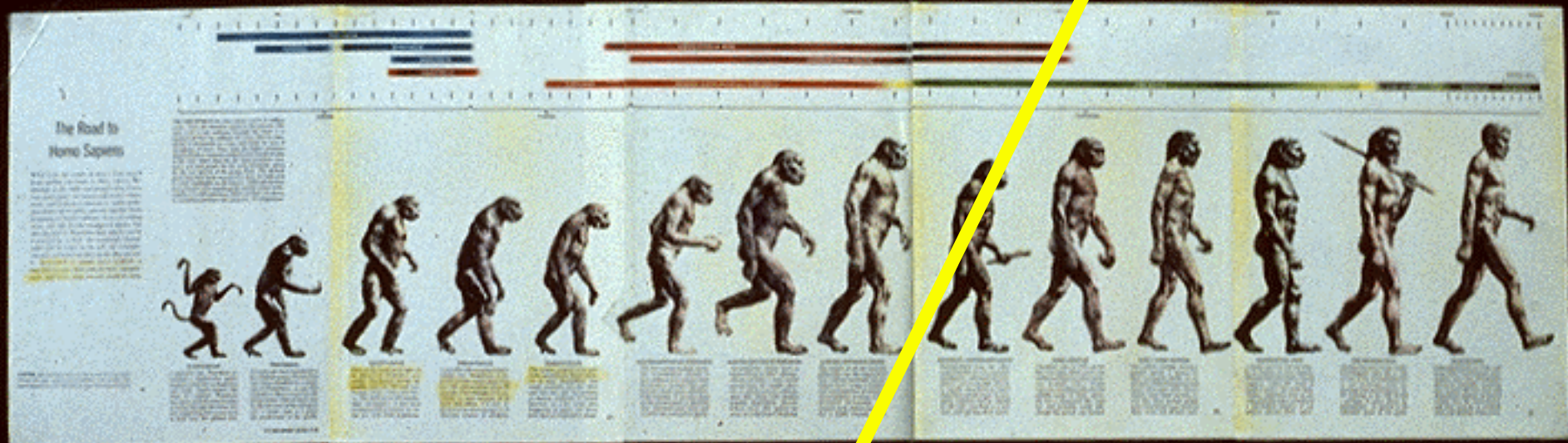
Man



Somewhere, something went terribly wrong



Man?

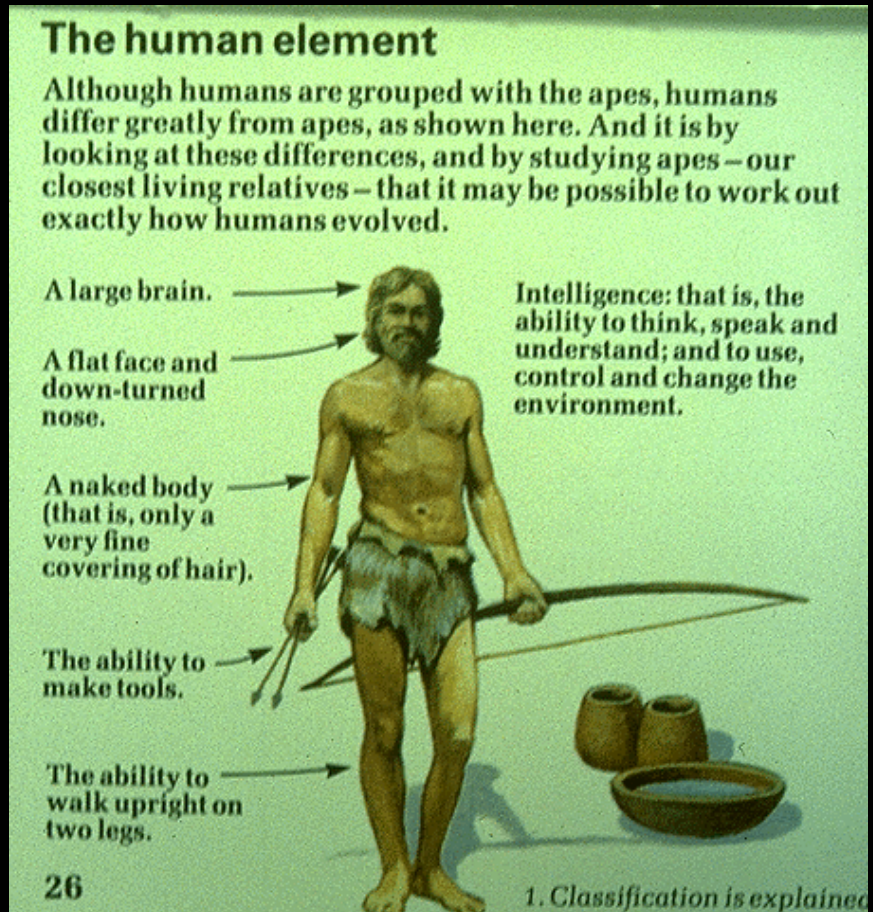


Measure of Man
Mind of Man
Morality of Man

Measure of Man

What is Man?

- 2-1-2-3 teeth, arched jaw shape
- large brain, ~1250cc
- no sagital crest, round occipital
- small brow ridges
- vertical forehead, chin
- bipedal
- vertical foramen magnum
- opposable thumb
- learns, not instinct
- tool maker
- language
- culture



Missing Link?

J. Chervas w/Stern & Susman, *New Scientist*, 1983, pg172-8



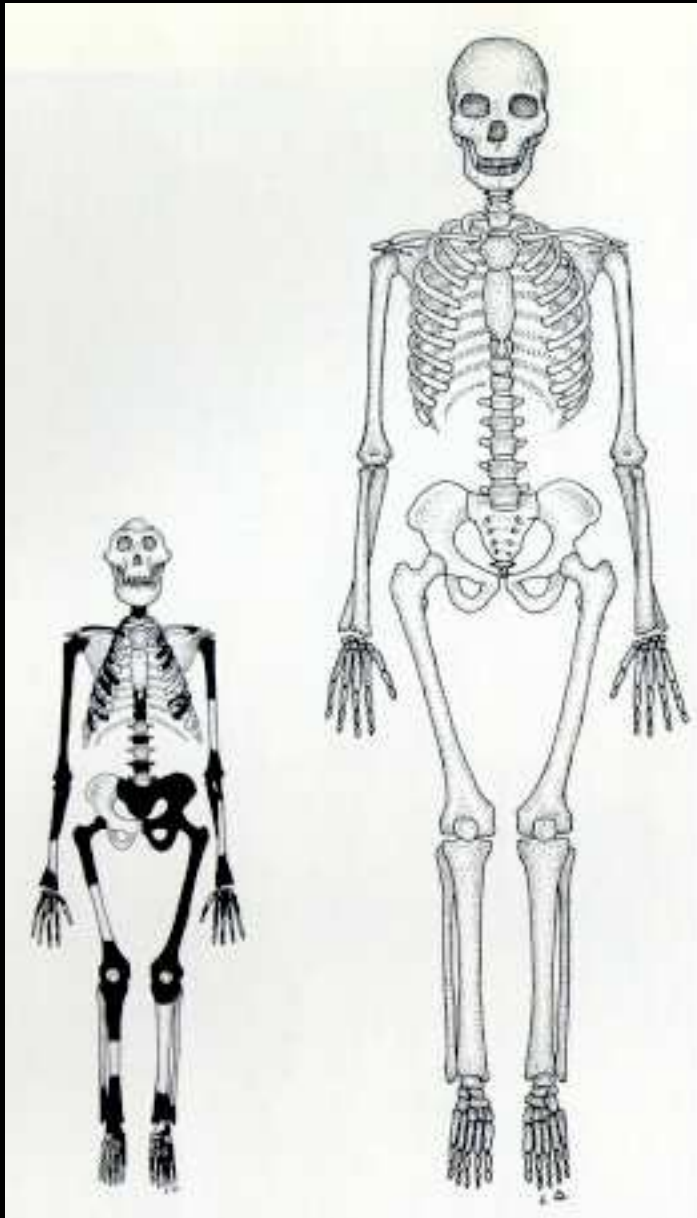
- height of chimpanzee
- V-shaped jaw --> *more chimp-like*
- arms long as legs --> *also chimp-ish*
- *more arboreal than upright --> chimp*

Lucy

45% complete !



Lucy



**3.5 feet tall
bipedal knees & pelvis**



Australopithecines & Homo



Could Adam & Eve Be Real?



Rebecca Cann

- **mitochondrial DNA**
- **all women appear to have a common single genetic origin**
- **not millions of years ago**
- **~150,000 yrs**
 - **error: +/- 75,000**
- **as recent as 75,000 !**
- **Eve ?**

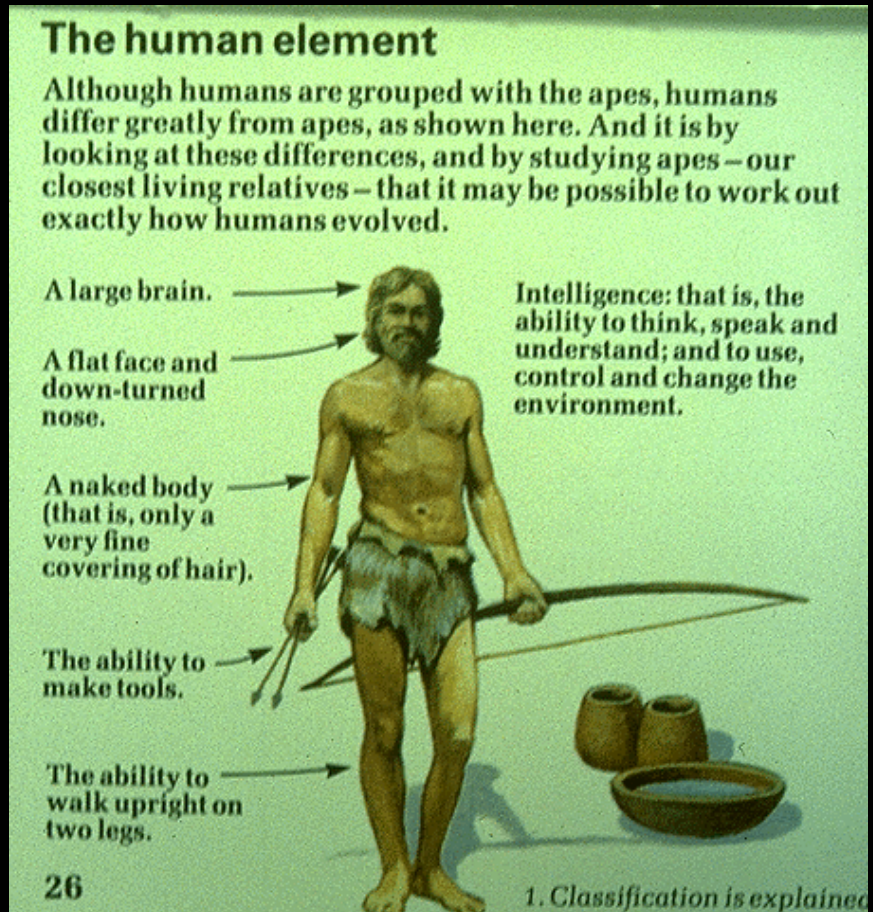
Could Adam & Eve Be Real?

- **Y-chromosome studies**
- **all men appear to have a common single genetic origin**
- **not millions of years ago**
- **75,000 yrs**
 - error: +/- 25,000 yrs
- **as recent as 50,000 !**
- **Adam ?**
- **mitochondrial DNA**
- **all women appear to have a common single genetic origin**
- **not millions of years ago**
- **~150,000 yrs**
 - error: +/- 75,000
- **as recent as 75,000 !**
- **Eve ?**

(Caution: This data is constantly under revision and we're getting younger all the time.)

What is Man?

- 2-1-2-3 teeth, arched jaw shape
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That Thou art Mindful of Him?

- **worships**
- **reasons, thinks, decides, acts of freewill**
- **conscience, ‘oughter’, altruism**
- **creative: writes, music, art, building, tools**
- **morals**
- **concerned about life & death, hereafter**
- **Bible: ‘in His image’ - a soul with spirit of God! - we call these things ‘Persons’**

“bara” – Genesis 1

- 1:1 In the beginning God created the heavens and earth.**
- 1:21 And God created the great sea monsters, and every living creature that moves, with which the waters swarmed after their kind, and every winged bird after its kind; and God saw that it was good.**
- 1:27 And God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.**

Mind of Man

Wikipedia on “Self-awareness”

Human self-awareness leads us to recognize three core paradoxes or absurd features of the human condition:

(1) The human imagination has no physical boundaries, but our bodies do. In our minds, we can instantly travel to the ends of the universe, the center of the earth, even the center of the sun. We can use our mental microscope to visualize germs, viruses, atoms, quarks. As soon as we detect something with any instrument, we can make images of it in our minds. We travel effortlessly in our thoughts. The boundless production of fiction literature is evidence of the creative powers of the human imagination. Yet physically we are bound to one specific, small planet, and due to the speed limit of the universe (speed of light), it appears that we are bound to a small neighborhood around this planet for the foreseeable future. This paradox is the physical frustration of the human condition.

Premise: man's concept of self in a context of time and space and community is unique.

It is impossible to explain this separation from the animals on the basis of a very brief stint of evolutionary adaptation.

T. Dobzansky, 1974

“Human self-awareness obviously differs greatly from any rudiments of mind that may be present in non-human animals. The magnitude of the difference makes it a difference in KIND, and not one of degree. Owing primarily to this difference, mankind became an extraordinary and unique product of...

biological evolution.”

So close, yet so far.

(2) Human spirits can motivate the noblest and holiest thoughts, the most altruistic actions, the most beneficial generosityes. But they can also produce the most horrible cruelties and violence against countless people, including suicide of the perpetrators. Our will effortlessly moves our thoughts one way and then another, untamed by moral law or conscience. Leaders can sway whole populations to do things -- benevolent or malevolent -- that individuals would never, on their own, have contemplated. How can these two extremes coexist in the same individual? We don't observe such extremes in other animals. They are exclusive to the human condition.

Premise: Free will (an accountable spirit) is real and impossible to explain in any naturalistic paradigm.

Charles Sherrington, 1953

“A radical distinction has therefore arisen between life and mind. The former is an affair of chemistry and physics; the latter escapes chemistry and physics.”

Could he mean the soul, the spirit?

Could the Bible have been right all along?

(3) Human actions and our very lives are motivated by hope -- that we can make a difference, that we can learn and grow and build and make things better. Yet physically speaking we know that we are mortal, we are made of dust, and we will return to dust. Despite this realization, hope springs eternal. Without hope, as Albert Camus said, the only serious philosophical question is why we should not commit suicide. Hope gets us up in the morning, and drives us forward every day. By extension, we hope for eternal life beyond the grave -- God, heaven, paradise -- because otherwise our existential situation has no meaning. These aspirations -- for hope, meaning, significance, purpose, identity, peace, happiness, beauty, love -- are all aspects of human spirituality. These paradoxes present universal, inescapable questions about life. Attempts to explain or resolve these paradoxes are the domain of religion and philosophy.

Human Spirituality

- **Hope**
- **Meaning**
- **Significance**
- **Purpose**
- **Identity**
- **Peace**
- **Happiness**
- **Beauty**
- **Love**

Science without religion is lame,
religion without science is blind.

Albert **Einstein**



Francis Collins

Director:

Human Genome Project

Author:

Language of God

But then I went to medical school, and encountered life and death issues at the bedsides of my patients. Challenged by one of those patients, who asked "What do you believe, doctor?", I began searching for answers.

I had to admit that the science I loved so much was powerless to answer questions such as "What is the meaning of life?" "Why am I here?" "Why does mathematics work, anyway?" "If the universe had a beginning, who created it?" "Why are the physical constants in the universe so finely tuned to allow the possibility of complex life forms?" "Why do humans have a moral sense?" "What happens after we die?"

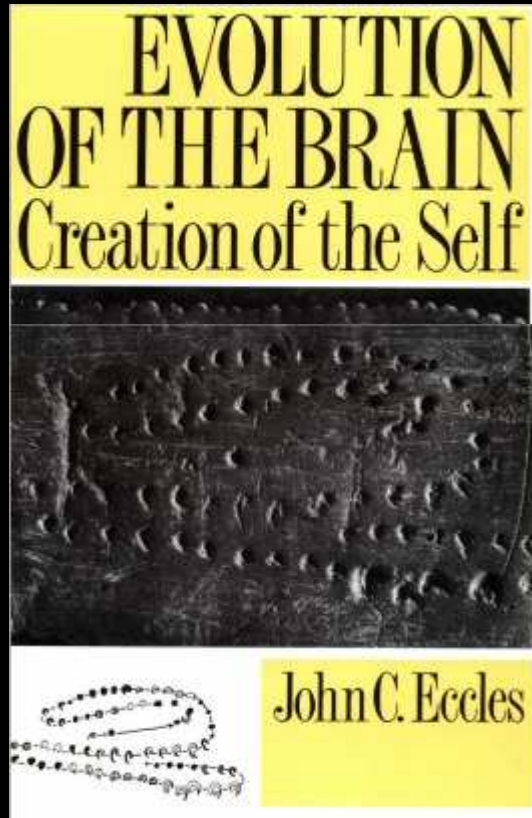
But reason alone cannot prove the existence of God. Faith is reason plus revelation, and the revelation part requires one to think with the spirit as well as with the mind. You have to hear the music, not just read the notes on the page. Ultimately, a leap of faith is required.

For me, that leap came in my 27th year, after a search to learn more about God's character led me to the person of Jesus Christ. Here was a person with remarkably strong historical evidence of his life, who made astounding statements about loving your neighbor, and whose claims about being God's son seemed to demand a decision about whether he was deluded or the real thing. After resisting for nearly two years, I found it impossible to go on living in such a state of uncertainty, and I became a follower of Jesus.

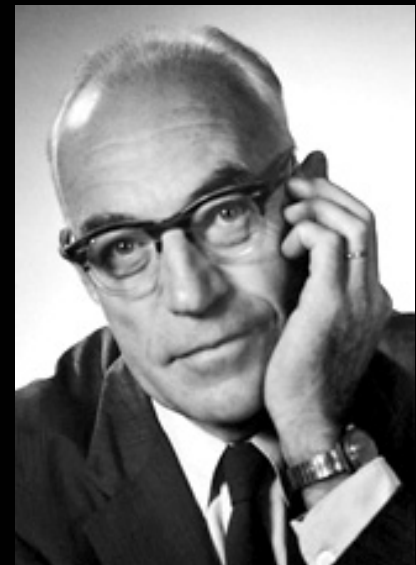
<http://www.cnn.com/2007/US/04/03/collins.commentary/index.html>

Sir John Eccles, neurologist

Evolution of the Brain, 1991



“I am constrained to attribute the uniqueness of the *Self* or *Soul* to a supernatural spiritual creation.”



God's Spirit "testifies" to our spirit of our common family bond

- Hope
- Meaning
- Significance
- Purpose
- Identity
- Peace
- Happiness
- Beauty
- Love
- Creative agents: engineers and artists
- Thus we reason from the physical to the metaphysical (Romans 1:19-20)
- Our "oughter" battles our "wanter"
- Worshipful (even if only of self)
- Altruistic – self-sacrifice
- Spiritual Identity – "I" am not my body

For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." **The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.** Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

Romans 8:14-17

Morality of Man

Image bearers of God's likeness

- **Morality – our sense of “ought”**
- **Revulsion toward Evil**
 - **Horror of “Death Camps”**
- **Altruism – self-sacrifice**
- **Guilt – leads us to seek relief**
- **Ideals**
- **Virtues**
- **Concern for lower life**
- **Concern for environment**
- **Sense of a Higher Purpose – a higher Call**

**God does not call us just to be
“right” – *i.e.*, to be on the winning
side of some debate.**

**Called to
Righteousness
Holiness
*Justice***

**Press on toward His higher call
To be Children of God**

See how great a love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God; and such we are. For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him.

Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is.

And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.

1 John 3:1-3

**Always and forever, the best
“evidence” for Christianity is a
Man -- the Person of Jesus Christ
resurrected from death on a cross.**

**“He came and dwelt among us as a
Man.”**